

## It's a Toss Up Catch the juggling craze at annual festival - in Lincolnshire

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Every month, festivals are planned around the country to bring people together to toss around a few balls or clubs or other props.

This weekend, Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire is the location for Toss Up, a juggling festival that attracts the best jugglers from every state. The eighth annual event is sponsored by the school's community juggling club, said club sponsor Larry Scalzitti. The club is made up of students and area residents.

"Once you get the juggling bug, it is hard to put things down," he said.

Every day, spectators can either juggle or watch others in the school's field house. Open juggling will run from 6 p.m. to midnight Friday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. The event attracted 500 people last year.

Scalzitti said juggling is a great hobby because the list of props and tricks for each prop is endless.

Toss Up attracts some of the greatest jugglers, not only to meet and greet visitors, but also to lead workshops. Workshops from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday are geared for beginners to advanced jugglers. Instructors will cover all types of props, such as balls, clubs, cigar boxes and devil sticks. The festival also will feature vendors around the country who will sell props and juggling games and offer a free raffle Sunday.

Instead of hosting its amateur impromptu show Friday night, Scalzitti said this year the public will be treated to the new solo show by Jay Gilligan. The show will be at 5 p.m. in the recital hall.

Gilligan, Minneapolis, is an International Juggling Association world champion.

"Jay is a gifted performer, very innovative and very creative," he said.

Every juggling festival features a big Saturday show, and the event at Stevenson will be no exception. Doors will open at 7 p.m. featuring music by the school jazz band. The show will start at 7:30 p.m. Tickets cost \$10 in advance and \$20 at the door.

The headliner will be "Iukaluka," featuring Luke Wilson of England and Ilka Licht of Germany. Scalzitti said Licht comes from the entertainment company Cirque du Soleil, and Wilson has performed with the Moscow State Circus.

Among the area jugglers are Adam Zeigler, who teaches at the Actors Gymnasium in Evanston, and Jon Brady, an gold medal junior champion from Aurora who is working to become a professional at age 15.

A unique act will be Mark Faje. His signature act is to balance a running lawn mower on his chin while audience members throw vegetables into the blade. He also likes to juggle bowling balls with steak knives inside them.

"He's a dangerous juggler," Scalzitti said.

Saturday's show will not feature only jugglers. There also will be Garrett Popek, a world-champion gun slinger, baton twirling, a yo-yo act and two youth circus groups.

"It's a variety show, not all juggling. But there is top juggling," Scalzitti said.

**Caption:** Come juggle or just watch, learn tips for all types of tricks and props, and watch performances by the world's top jugglers as Stevenson High School hosts Toss Up 2004 Friday through Sunday. Daily Herald File Photo

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